



MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH &
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 10, 2008

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Memphis Faith Community Awarded Funds for Enhanced Mental Health Services in West Tennessee

NASHVILLE— The Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Commissioner Virginia Trotter Betts presented a “big check” today to the Memphis faith community for \$250,000. The check will fund a faith-based mental health pilot program that will address utilization disparity of mental health services in West Tennessee by attempting to remove the stigma often associated with mental health services in minority communities.

“I’m extremely pleased we can provide funds to support this unique pilot program in West Tennessee,” said Governor Phil Bredesen. “With one out of four persons being affected by mental illness in their lifetime, it’s important for people to understand that treatment is available and recovery is possible.”

This unique pilot program, known as Emotional Fitness Centers, will be offered in several local churches in Shelby county with outreach to Hardeman and Fayette counties. The focus is on underserved African American communities in need of mental health services who are not accessing the system through the traditional models, likely due to stigma associated with mental illness.

“A major goal of the Emotional Fitness Centers is to increase awareness and appropriate utilization of mental health services with African American communities,” said Commissioner Betts. “This grant will be used to educate these communities on the relationship between positive mental health and overall health and the importance of timely treatment if a mental disorder is present.”

“There is currently some lack of trust in traditional institutions among the black community. Additionally, the stigma associated with mental illness makes it even more difficult to get people to seek needed treatment” stated Pastor Diane Young with the Healing Center. “We hope to bring some of that trust back and help individuals understand that people care and that help works.”

For more information on Emotional Fitness Centers visit www.emotionalfitnesscenter.org. For additional mental health or substance abuse information, please contact TDMHDD’s Office of Public Information and Education at (615) 253-4812 or visit www.state.tn.us/mental.

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